

THE TRAGEDY OF THE SEA OF MARMORA

HOW THE GREEKS OF MARMORA
WERE EXPELLED FROM THEIR
HOMES AND SCATTERED AMONG
THE VILLAGES AROUND KERMASTI
OR

THE UNWRITTEN TESTAMENT
OF THE GREEKS WHO WERE FORCED
TO EMBRACE MOHAMEDANISM.

WITH
INTRODUCTION
BY
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ATHENES, GREECE.



Atrocities.



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INTRODUCTION

Marmora, (of old named Prokonnesus) is a mountainous island of 30 miles circumference, situated in the middle of the sea of Marmora, or Propontis, as the Greeks call it. It is the largest island in the Sea of Marmora and is distant about 70 miles from Constantinople and 40 miles from Galipoli, or Hellespont. The Sea of Marmora lies between the Straights of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, the former connecting it with the Mediterranean and the latter with the Black Sea.

The capital of the island has the same name as the island itself and is situated on its southwest coast. There are five other villages called: Proasteion, Klazaki, Aphthonion, Palatia and Gallimi. The island is inhabited mostly by enslaved Greeks, by a hundred Turks and eighty Hebrews; in other words the population of the island, which amounts to about 15,000, is purely Greek.

They devote themselves primarily to shipping, commerce, fishing, agriculture, to the cultivation of vineyards, and to the mining of fine marble and granite.

It is interesting to note that St. Sophia was built principally with the marble from these quarries and it was in fact these quarries which gave the name of Marmora to the island, which is also famous for its wines and oils.

The whole island has 29 Greek churches, 12 schools, 50 teachers, 50 priests and about 1500 students of both sexes.

To this world war this island has contributed in its sacrifices of blood and treasure. Many of her inhabitants who had taken refuge in Greece Independent volunteered at once in the Greek and French armies and are now fighting at the Balkan front together with the Allies. Others are to be found in France, being engaged in work connected with this war of liberation. Others are also fighting under the

Stars and Stripes on the Western front with the Allies for a common cause against a common enemy and for their national restoration.

Eight big steamers owned by enslaved Greeks of the island and amounting to 34,000 tons, while in the service of the Allies, have been torpedoed, at different periods, by German submarines.

The Greek Christian communities, as well as those of the neighboring islands and along the shores of the Sea of Marmora were flourishing before the declaration of the present war. As soon as the Young Turks decided to enter into this war and fight together with the Germans, a great misfortune befell the inhabitants of the island. The Young Turks and their criminal Government instigated by German Kultur and Barbarism, cruelly deported the whole Greek population to the interior of Asia Minor to find certain death there. They were not allowed to take anything with them or to dispose of their property which was summarily confiscated by the Turks.

What follows is the tragic story of how these unfortunate beings were expelled from Marmora and were scattered among the Moslem villages around Kermasti, Apollonias and Mihaliteh.

It is the testimony of Mr. P. Theodosios, a friend of mine, who was an eye witness of these outrages and was in fact, one of the victims. He succeeded, however, in escaping to Athens. His testimony is still further confirmed by a lady now living in New York, Mrs. Serafinia Tseikesi and her sister, who were present during the occurrences of these sad events.

Note: This is a list of the names and d.w. capacity of the Steamers mentioed above. Georgios 6000 tons, Maris 5800, Erini 4000, Pri-conessos 6500, Proconnisos 4500, Efstratios 2000, Daphni 2200, and Lefcossia 2000, aggregation in all 34,000 tons.

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THE TRAGEDY OF THE SEA OF MARMORA

On the 5th of June, 1915, the Moudir (Governor) of Marmora called together the Board of Councillors of the Greek Community and communicated to them that for reasons of state the inhabitants of Marmora were to be sent to Asia Minor and that this fact was to be made known to the people by the Board of Councillors. The Councillors shuddered before such a decision, burst into tears and began to entreat the aid of the Moudir and to ask his advice as to how they might entreat the pity of the government.

Instead of any further emotion on the part of the Moudir or advice on his part, they were thrust out with the words *Siktir Keratalar* (Get out you rascals). In a council held in the courthouse on the night of the 5th to 6th of June, 1915, it was agreed that permission should be given to one of the Christians to go to Constantinople and do what he could. In fact, on the 6th of June, the man selected by the Councillors started for Constantinople.



Refugees escaping from Turkish fury

At midnight, however, of the 6th to 7th of June, the regular government officials began knocking at the doors of the houses telling the occupants to light up and make their preparations for departure, for a government steamer would arrive very early in the morning to transfer the inhabitants to the Asia Minor coast.

It is impossible to describe adequately the state of the inhabitants at that moment. Lamentations and groans, torrents of tears, kisses of parting friends, prayers to God and to the Saints were heard everywhere. Very early on the 7th, Charon's boat came to anchor and began to whistle, provoking a new commotion among the people. In an hour the embarkation of the exiles began. One saw only general mourning among all, even down to the babes. The Moudir of Marmora as a military officer for the nonce, had charge of the expatriation, being added by the custom house inspector and the court house officials. He appeared before the houses outside of which each had placed whatever he wished to take with him. If this was limited to a mattress or coverlet or an old box, the transportation was permitted, but if there was more than this, the things were held back by the Moudir. Woe to anyone who dared to persist in taking along with him more than one blanket. Eustathius Jchannou made bold to ask that he be permitted to take with him at least two coverlets for his family, which consisted of twelve members, but his boldness was punished by a blow with a club by one of the officials, and a torrent of abuse. Similar treatment was meted out to others who dared to ask for some favor. Thus all movable and immovable property was left in the possession of the Government, the inhabitants being forced to embark without any of their belongings.

They were crowded on to the steamer as many people as it would hold standing up, during the whole journey, until their disembarkation at Panormos (Panderma).

So on the evening of the 7th of June 1915, before the sun set, the first load of the refugees from Marmora was embarked and the vessel weighed anchor and set sail. At the first revolutions of the propeller there was a tragically moving scene, not only among the women, but among the men as well. Since it happened that the men were in one part of the vessel and the women and children in another, the women began weeping and singing, "Farewell, sweet fatherland", and the men, "Farewell, ye lofty hills." Such were the grief in the hearts of all, that even the Turkish sailors were touched for they wept too, and were most solicitous until we landed at Panormus (Panderma).

SCATTERING OF FAMILIES

On the following day they disembarked us at the railroad station of Panormus, where they took away from us some of the fathers of families on the ground that they were of military age. Toward eve-

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ning, they divided us up into carloads of 52-55 persons per car, bag-
gage and all. On the following day they set us down at a station
called Okdji-Giol and scattered us among the farms like ownerless
cattle.

There, entirely ignorant of the fate that awaited us, we met with
the inhabitants of the island Koutali who had been banished from their
homes a short time before. Exposed to the burning rays of the sun
and to the darkness and terror of the night, we were likewise without
any food, the transportation of which had been strictly forbidden us,
and even without water until the second day when the station agent
saw to it that two carloads of water (luke warm, however) was brought
to us.

We have been deprived of bread, too, if some of our number had
not been able to procure it from the Turkish villages. For twenty-
eight days without bread, olives or cheese, we set eyes on little else
that was edible, nor did we for reasons easily guessed get a whole
night's sleep. Our hardships could not fail to produce their natural
results. Every day three or four deaths occurred. We did not know
where we were to be sent. Finally, after remaining for sixteen days
scattered among the farms, without the slightest shelter from sun and
rain, the governor of Kermasti in the district of Proussa, Kemal Ef-
fendi, with the mayor and the prominent Christian John Johannides
appeared and, summoning some of the foremost men among us, an-
nounced that the inhabitants of Marmora and Palatia were to be set-
tled in Kermasti, while those of Coutali and Proasteion were to be
sent to Michalitch, and those of Galami, Anthone and Clazakides to
the lake of Apollonias.

He told us likewise that the transportation of our goods would be
by ox wagons, while we would follow on foot all day long. And so
it was! Within twenty days they transported us to the above men-
tioned places, but they took care, upon our entrance, to separate the
members of families from one another. The wagon bearing the ef-
fects of eight or ten families entered, and the families followed; but
when they were about to go in, a government official appeared and
ordered: You five go in, you seven go to the village over there, and
you ten to that other village. And so they stayed, baggage in one
place, father in another, mother in a third, and the rest of the family
elsewhere. This course outraged our feelings, and the influential
men with the aid of Mr. Johannides appealed to the Governor who
gathered us together in Kermasti but with considerable of difficulty.

We found there, in an absolutely hopeless condition, the inhabi-
tants of Gallipoli whom we had hospitably received a few months

before. Some of us were placed by the officials in different barns, or in the Greek and Armenian school buildings, and some of us rented rooms on our own initiative. The crowding together and the hardships we endured resulted in 13-15 deaths per day out of the 2,000 inhabitants of Marmora alone.

ASIATIC GREEKS IN THE DRESS OF EVZONES

Kermasti is situated in the plain of the Rindakus, which divides the town into two parts, connected by a bridge of 115 metres. Many of the villages that belong to the district of Kermasti are inhabited exclusively by Turks, but Turks that are utterly different from the ordinary Turks, for they are descended from Orthodox Greeks who have embraced Mohammedanism. They are distinguished by differences in character, stature, bodily grace, bearing, clothing, manners and customs. Their clothing resembles that of the Evzones. They wear a crushed Tunis fez with a long tassel that reaches the shoulders. A waistcoat with gold buttons; a selahlik (big, heavy leather belt) with a pistol in it, around the waist, a coat with loose sleeves and in place of a fustanella, pantlets that are so short, that if cut open, they would form a fustanella. When they bake bread they make the sign of the cross on every loaf because such is the unwritten tradition handed down from their ancestors.

They must shurely be Mohammedanized Greeks, for this region is that in which the Synod of the 318 Fathers formed the early Nicene Creed. Other evidences are the ruins of churches scattered everywhere in the region and the ancient marble inscriptions built into pavements, steps, and walls of houses, cafes, shops, etc.

Kermasti has 20,000 Turkish inhabitants, 700 Armenians and 400 Greeks. At first the Turks would have nothing to do with us, but they changed their attitude when persuaded by our conduct that we were decent, peaceable, harmless men. Unfortunately, this change did not last long, for those murderers of Hellenism, the Germans, saw to it that they ceased to have any dealings with us. They told them that for centuries we had ruled over the Empire, progressing constantly in trade, learning and the arts, at the cost of the Turks, and that they (the Turks) now had the chance to get even with us.

ASSASINATION AND HUMILIATION OF PRIESTS

Before long a chance appeared, for they killed one of our priests named Kyprianos and the rest of our priests were often subjected to many indignities. They were for instance, tripped up by the Turk-

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ish boys, and corpses, that were being borne to the cemetery, were
stoned. If a man dared to go from one village to another, it was at
the risk of his life. A certain Mastro-Georgi with his son ventured
to go from Michalitch to Apollonias, and both were found two days
later, beheaded, near a stream.

Two twelve year old children went outside of Kermasti to collect
wood; one succeeded in escaping into the city and informed his friends
of his brother's danger. The boys' parents went out with an officer
and found the lad dead, with a rope around his neck, and his hands
tied.



Deported from their homes.

They did not balk even at Turkification, there being several cases,
where Greek girls were carried off forcibly by Turks. We were
unable to make complaint, because the Governor, Kemal Effendi,
who had wished to protect us in our settling in Kermasti, as des-
cribed above, was accused by the Young Turks of being our pro-
tector and was dismissed from office, and so one can easily imagine
the attitude taken by his successor. Day by day our life became
more unbearable owing to the lack of money and means of commu-
nication. There was plenty of food and it was cheap, but, for 95 per
cent of the population, it was difficult to get bread. There was not
one of these 95 per cent of the families that did not sell even its last
garment at a cheap price. Meat cost 20 leptas (4 or 5 cents) the oka
(2-3 lbs), but a few ate it. Such was the wretchedness that the child-
ren of good families were compelled to wait below the windows of

the Turkish houses to pick up the onion tops and eat them. Many especially from Gallipoli would wait for the Thursday market day in order to pick up the garbage when the sale was over, falling like birds of prey upon their spoil, which they washed in the river and devoured to allay the pangs of hunger, while the bolder of them would jump into the river to get the bones thrown away by the Turks for the sake of the little meat left on them.

The danger of starvation was becoming general but this was prevented by the receipt of a large sum of money sent by a patriotic benefactor Mr..... who thus saved his exiled compatriots from certain destruction as also of a considerable sum sent by a compatriot, a Mr. Those who had relatives in America also received help from that country.

Very disquieting for the exiles was the rapidly increasing price of food, which pressed heavily upon our pecuniary resources and stripped us of all we had. Suddenly, however, joy was brought into the hearts of all, convincing us that we had been released from our dangers, for orders were issued by the Governor of Kermasti that on the 10th of September, 1915, we were to return to our homes in consequence of the receipt by him of a telegram from the Minister of the Interior. What exultation, what joyful emotions of gratitude and thankfulness to the government we manifested, can easily be imagined. The people repaired to the government buildings and gratefully addressed the government for its paternal clemency toward us. The governor in reply stated that the government had never ceased to interest itself in the safety and prosperity of the people and that, on returning to our homes, we should devote ourselves to our work, loyally supporting the government. Immediately after this most formal declaration and order, the few who were able to do so proceeded to hire wagons and four families immediately set forth. For the transportation of the remaining families a committee undertook to provide at the expense of Mr. But it was all a dream. The next day we were called to the Government building and orders were given that under no circumstances should anyone dare to leave Kermasti under threat of severe punishment.

Imagine our predicament! Nevertheless, we remained uncomplainingly, with only the sweetness of our longing to return to our homes and convinced that we were imprisoned in an iron cage, only hoping that God would be merciful to us, since Turkey's enemies had failed to take advantage of that glorious opportunity, at the time of the bombarding of the Dardanelles, to disembark troops in Asia Minor, when the Turks had received orders to make ready to withdraw because

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was the rapidly increasing price of our pecuniary resources and strip- however, joy was brought into the fact that we had been released from our danger. The Governor of Kermasti that on the 15th we were to return to our homes, in consequence of a telegram from the Minister of War that joyful emotions of gratitude which we manifested, can easily be imagined. The government buildings and gratefully received its paternal clemency toward us. The government had never ceased to prosper the prosperity of the people and that, we could devote ourselves to our work, and that. Immediately after this most joyful news, a few who were able to do so promised to immediately set forth. For the families a committee undertook to arrange for their departure. But it was all a dream. The government building and orders were issued but should anyone dare to leave Kermasti, they would be arrested.

Nevertheless, we remained uncomplaining, our longing to return to our homes was unquenched. We were confined in an iron cage, only hoping for an opportunity, since Turkey's enemies had failed to take advantage of the opportunity, at the time of the bombardment of troops in Asia Minor, when they might have made ready to withdraw because

the enemy was approaching, and were even packing up their belongings and food supplies for their journey, and while others were preparing plans to receive the Allies and to get rid of their murderous and treacherous government. Thus, then, there began once more the torture of our life in banishment under the most difficult conditions.



Deported patients cared by relief agents.

tions of maintaining our existence and freedom of action. Meat was the only article of food that stayed at its original price, and we were at a loss to understand this. But before long our perplexity was solved. Our cattle were being sold by the Turks in the market of Kermasti at a cheap price. We did not know whether they were buying them or stealing them for the villages evacuated by us. They were buying them.

The promise of the German organizers that they would make all the Turks rich had to be proved true. As soon as they had transported us to Asia Minor and there remained only 40-50 shepherds on the island to guard our goats, sheep and other cattle, the Turks who wanted to buy the cattle and other property were notified by the Moudir to present themselves.

So the Turks, not only on the island of Marmora, but everywhere else, where the population had been deported, hastened, each, to buy whatever he wanted, or, needed. No great capital was needed to buy a hundred cows, for cattle, that were worth 250 drachmas a head, were sold for 13-15 drachmæ, and with the addition of three drachmæ for transportation to Kermasti, the cost reached 16-19 drachmæ. These were sold to other Turks there for prices up to 30 drachmas, which was just what the hide alone brought, for export to Germany, and thus the meat remained nearly gratis for consumption.

At similar prices were the rest of our belongings sold, boats, skiffs, wine, salted fish, olives and every sort of native or export merchandise, while the owners of this property were living in banishment deprived even of their daily bread. In fact, the Turks were thus enriched by plundering the property of the Greeks, while the 40-50 shepherds in the island after enduring indescribable tortures, and burying with their own hands their parents, their brothers and sisters, and their children without religious rites, were themselves driven out, shortly after the stealing of the cattle, and came to Kermasti.

By them we were informed about the fate of our property and our churches and schools. The newly built magnificent Kyriakides schools were turned into laundries for the Turkish families of the place. The central church of the Taxiarchs, which was the extreme point to which the shepherds had been allowed to come, in order to water their cattle, was transformed into a theatre. In its pulpit the Turkish tax collector, Osman, mockingly imitated the Metropolitan discharging his duty as a preacher, while in the gallery for women a phonograph was set up to the music of which the vandal Turks sang and danced. The church itself they turned into a storehouse, naming Tsinar Tsamisi, (the Temple of the Plane Tree) since it has at one corner a plane tree. The icons of the church were utterly scorned and scattered abroad, after a certain Jew, Nasim, had undertaken to preserve them and had collected them and placed them inside the church.

Their fate can, I think, be easily imagined since even church and schools were not in the least respected. Everybody took from them

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whatever he pleased, windows, panes of glass, doors, cabinets, tiles,
and anything else, the removal of which tended to make them entirely
useless. In some of the better houses officials of the Houkimat (gov-
ernment) and Turkish community established themselves. It seems,
however, that flees or bedbugs troubled them and they burned the
houses. Thus, the houses of N. I. Eustathiades, Theodosios Taboutz-
oglou and Nicolaos Kioulaki were destroyed by fire. When after
seven months of compulsory isolation at Kermasti, I succeeded in reach-
ing Constantinople, I found there compatriot Turks who confessed that
they had brought a load of wool from the bedding which we had aban-
doned in our homes, which they had bought at public sale from the
Houkimat of Marmora at the price of 40 paras the okka.

In reply to my question as to what use was made of this wool, I
was told that there had been established a special bureau in order
to obtain this and send it to Germany. They took particular pride
in the fact that they had sold it at the rate of 12 piastres an okka (one
half dollar). Thus you see the very wool from our beds was sent off
to Germany. And yet, there are still people who think that the Turks
ought to be reckoned among the civilized races because, they happen
to have been created in the form of human beings.

Much as I desire to tell the story of our sufferings, it is impossible
for me to picture them, as they actually were. I believe that, in time
writers will be found who can adequately describe the wrongs done to
us islanders and to the other Greek people who lived on the shores
of the Sea of Marmora.

I felt myself in duty bound to sketch thus briefly the outrages a-
gainst the 13,000 inhabitants of Comopolis and New Marmora, out-
rages, which were paralleled, or, even surpassed by those endured by
all the Islanders of the Province of Prokonesus.

The Relief Committee for Greeks of Asia Minor has sent to Kermasti, Apollonias, Mihaliteh, substantial contributions for the relief of these refugees from Marmora.

All contributions for Greek relief work should be sent to

ROLLIN P. GRANT, Treas.

Irving National Bank

Woolworth Building

New York

(Office of the Committee at One Madison Avenue, Room 9047)